

## MOORS AND CHRISTIANS, AN HISTORIC SPECTACLE



Festival of Moors and Christians in Alcoy

**Streets decked out like the Middle Ages, magnificent processions, exciting mock battles...This is the festival of Moors and Christians: days filled with magic, legend and spectacle. For over four centuries, this festival has recreated the historic clash between two cultures. Come and enjoy this unique festival in which thousands of people take part year after year, all trying to outshine each other in splendour and brilliance.**

The festival of Moors and Christians is a very old tradition that dates back to the 16th century. It commemorates the confrontation that took place between Moorish and Christian soldiers in the 13th century over the rule of Spain. The events are held in honour of the city's patron saint who also played a decisive role in the battle. Thanks to the saint's sudden and unexpected intervention, victory went to the Christians in spite of their being outnumbered by the Moors.

The attraction, grandeur and popular nature of these festivities have caused them to spread to many parts of Spain, although they are especially popular in **Valencia** and **Alicante**. There are many variations on these festivities, as each place has its own history and unique elements that set it apart from the rest. The festivals of **Alcoy** and **Villajoyosa** stand out for their spectacular nature and both are recognised as being of International Touristic Interest. By taking part in this festive re-enactment, you will have the chance to discover an important piece of Spanish history, at the same time as you enjoy a festival which never fails to outshine that of previous years.

### Spectacular participation

The start of the festivities is truly spectacular and well worth seeing: the arrival of both armies in the city. Beginning in the early hours of the morning, the streets, balconies and windows fill with people intent on not missing a single thing. To the accompaniment of music and with all the pomp and majesty you could hope for, the various groups that make up the Moorish and Christian factions march in procession, desperately trying to outshine each others sumptuous costumes. It tends to be one of the most popular and impressive events and in certain cases, such as that of Alcoy, over 5,000 people take part in the procession.

Another part of the festivities are the religious ceremonies held in honour of the city's patron saint. Yet there are still many more exciting moments awaiting you, such as the spectacular final battle. It follows the so-called "embajadas" (meeting of envoys) in the castle, in which each side reads a text in an attempt to persuade the other side to surrender. Once negotiations have failed, a mock battle ensues in which thousands of kilos of gunpowder is used, ending in victory for the Christians.

The final battle also marks the end of the festival and three days of fun, colour and extravagance. But don't worry, you will be able to enjoy the Moors and Christians again next year in Spain, in an even more spectacular and astonishing festival.

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